

0.a. Goal

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

0.b. Target

Target 16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

0.c. Indicator

Indicator 16.1.4: Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live

0.d. Series

Not applicable

0.e. Metadata update

2021-12-06

0.f. Related indicators

This indicator complements the other indicators of Target 16.1, which focus on the rate of intentional homicide (16.1.1), the rate of conflict-related deaths (16.1.2) and the proportion of the population subjected to physical, psychological, and sexual violence (16.1.3). It also relates to indicator 16.3.1, which refers to the proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities. By providing a perception-based measure of safety in the local neighbourhood, indicator 16.1.4 provides a more holistic picture of people's everyday experience of insecurity, crime and violence.

0.g. International organisations(s) responsible for global monitoring

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

1.a. Organisation

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

2.a. Definition and concepts

Definition:

This indicator refers to the proportion of the adult population who feel safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark.

Concepts:

“Neighbourhood” – the indicator aims to capture fear of crime in the context of people's everyday lives. It does so by limiting the area in question to the “neighbourhood” or “area they live in”. Various other formulations of local neighbourhood may be appropriate depending on cultural, physical and language context. Providing a universally applicable definition of neighborhood is challenging, as one's neighbourhood is a subjective concept that will mean different things to different people.^[1]

“After dark” – the indicator should specifically capture respondent's feelings and perceptions when walking alone after dark. The specific reference to darkness is important because according to research,^[2] darkness is one of the factors individuals perceive as important when assessing whether a situation is dangerous. While the specific reference to “after dark” is the preferable wording and widely used in crime victimisation surveys,^[3] a suitable alternative wording is “at night”.^[4] Specifying an exact time of the day (e.g. 6pm), however, is not advisable as darkness (not time of day per se) is the factor that affects individuals perception of safety, and cross-national as well as seasonal variation in the onset of darkness makes it problematic to establish a universally suitable threshold to define nighttime.

¹ Ferraro, K. F., & LaGrange, R. L.. 1987. The measurement of fear of crime. *Sociological Inquiry*, 57(1), 70–101. [↓](#)

² See e.g. Warr, Mark. 1990. "Dangerous Situations: Social Context and Fear of Victimization". *Social Forces*. 68 (3): 891-907. [↓](#)

³ UNODC-UNECE (2010) *Manual on Victimization Surveys*, p. 57; [↓](#)

⁴ Roberts B. (2014) Fear of Walking Alone at Night. In: Michalos A.C. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research*. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_1023 [↓](#)

2.b. Unit of measure

Proportion/percentage

2.c. Classifications

Not applicable

3.a. Data sources

The indicator is based on a single survey question ('How safe do you feel walking alone in your area/neighbourhood after dark?') to be included in a general population survey. The question can be an add-on survey module to be incorporated into other ongoing general population surveys (such as surveys on corruption, governance, quality of life, public attitudes or surveys on other topics) or be part of dedicated surveys on crime victimisation.

Data should be collected as part of a nationally representative probability sample of adult population (this typically refers to the population aged 18 years and above) residing in the country, irrespective of legal residence status. The sampling frame and sample design should ensure that results can be disaggregated at sub-national level. It is recommended that the sample size is sufficiently large to allow for disaggregation by age, gender, ethnicity, and other relevant.

The survey documentation should provide the specific wording used to collect data on fear of crime/perceptions of safety, enable the identification of possible discrepancies from standard definitions (e.g. no reference to "after dark" or "neighbourhood"), and allow an assessment of the overall data quality (e.g. sample size, target population, agency responsible for the data collection, etc.).

3.b. Data collection method

At the international level, data are collected by UNODC through the annual United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of the Criminal Justice Systems (UN-CTS) data collection initiative.^[5] Data are produced at the national level and sent to UNODC by Member States, usually through national UN-CTS Focal Points, which in most cases are national institutions responsible for data production in the area of crime and criminal justice (National Statistical Offices, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, etc.). Since 2017, the UN-CTS collects available nationally produced survey data on fear of crime as part of its victimisation module in the UN-CTS. When necessary, other data sources may be used, including from websites, publications, other forms of communication.

Data for SDG monitoring will be sent to countries for consultation prior to publication.

⁵ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/United-Nations-Surveys-on-Crime-Trends-and-the-Operations-of-Criminal-Justice-Systems.html> ↑

3.c. Data collection calendar

Countries are encouraged to conduct surveys on crime victimisation in regular intervals, but at least every four years to reflect progress between each of the quadrennial reviews of Goal 16 at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

3.d. Data release calendar

Data on relevant SDG indicators are collected, compiled and sent back to countries for data review annually. Data are then reported to UNSD through the regular reporting channels annually.

3.e. Data providers

Data are collected through official nationally representative surveys. In most cases, such surveys are conducted by National Statistical Offices (NSOs). In some cases, other national institutions or other entities may conduct such surveys according to the same methodological standards.

3.f. Data compilers

UNODC

3.g. Institutional mandate

UNODC – as custodian of the UN standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice, UNODC assists Member States in reforming their criminal justice systems in order to be effective, fair and humane for the entire population. UNODC develops technical tools to assist Member States in implementing the UN standards and norms and supports Member States through the provision of technical assistance in crime prevention and criminal justice reform. It does so through several Global programmes and through the UNODC field office network.

4.a. Rationale

Perception of safety is considered a subjective wellbeing indicator. It affects the way in which human beings interact with their surroundings, their health, and consequently, their quality of life. Indicator 16.1.4 taps into the concept of ‘fear of crime’, which has been elicited in dozens of crime victimization surveys, and the standard formulation used here has been shown to be applicable in different cultural contexts.^[6] It is important to note that fear of crime is a phenomenon that is separate from the prevalence of crime and that fear of crime may be even largely independent from actual experience. The perception of crime and the resulting fear of it is influenced by several factors, such as the awareness of crime, the public discussion, the media discourse, and personal circumstances. Nevertheless, fear of crime is an important indicator in itself as high levels of fear can negatively influence well-being and lead to reduced contacts with the public, reduced trust and engagement in the community, and thus represent an obstacle to development. Fear of crime also differs across demographic groups and this indicator helps to identify vulnerable groups.

⁶ UNODC-UNECE (2010) Manual on Victimization Surveys, p. 56. [1](#)

4.b. Comment and limitations

Victimization surveys (as dedicated surveys or as modules of household surveys) are usually restricted to the general population living in households above a certain age (typically 15 or 18 years of age), while sometimes an upper age limit is also applied (typically 65, 70 or 75 years of age).

There are several limitations associated with the wording of the survey question used to measure fear of crime (‘How safe do you feel walking alone in your area/neighbourhood after dark?’). First, the question assumes that respondents do the following: (1) go out, (2) go out alone, (3) go out in their neighbourhood, and (4) go out after dark. For many respondents, the reasons for not going out alone in their neighbourhood after dark may have nothing or little to do with crime and more to do with personal and circumstantial issues, such as lack of mobility, childcare commitments, or the use of a car that allows them to travel further afield. Second, the question does not define the meaning of “neighbourhood”, which may mean different things to different respondents, even those living in the same street. Third, the question does not explicitly refer to ‘crime’, but rather it is implicit in the question. There may be other reasons unrelated to crime (e.g. wild animals, traffic, etc.) why respondents may not feel safe walking around their neighbourhood after dark.^[7]

⁷ UNODC-UNECE (2010) Manual on Victimization Surveys, p. 57. [1](#)

4.c. Method of computation

The question used in victimization surveys is: How safe do you feel walking alone in your area/neighbourhood after dark?^[8] Answer options are typically: (1) Very safe, (2) safe, (3) unsafe (4), very unsafe, (5) I never go out alone at night/does not apply, (99) don’t know.^[9] The proportion of population that feel safe is calculated by summing up the number of respondents who feel “very safe” and “safe” and dividing the total by the total number of respondents, and multiplying by 100.

$$16.1.4 = \frac{\text{Number of respondents who feel very safe or safe walking alone after dark in their neighbourhood}}{\text{Total number of survey respondents}} \times 100$$

⁸ This question is intended to capture respondents’ perception of safety when thinking about crime, although it does not explicitly mention crime or prime respondents to think about crime. Where the respondent’s answer is “Unsafe” or “Very unsafe”, the following probing question may be asked to further understand why respondents feel unsafe: “Why do you feel unsafe walking alone in your area/neighbourhood at night after dark?” Possible answer options should be tailored to the specific country context and, in addition to crime-related reasons could also include options that are not crime-related. To avoid biasing respondents answers, it is recommended that answer options are not revealed to the respondent. [1](#)

⁹ It is recommended that where the respondent’s answer is “I never go out alone after dark”, the following probing question is asked: “How safe *would* you feel if you went outside after dark?”.. [1](#)

4.d. Validation

The data for the indicator is collected through household surveys conducted by National Statistics Offices (NSOs) or other institutions following tight survey protocols and complying with the metadata. Data producers are encouraged to strictly follow the data quality practices, protocols and frameworks in relation of data quality. In addition to the data, countries are requested to report on the metadata which serves as one additional layer of validation and verification of the data by confronting with the metadata used and the recommended for global reporting. Before publication by custodian agencies, a standardised “pre-publication process” is implemented, where national stakeholders can verify and review the data before publication.

4.e. Adjustments

Not applicable

4.f. Treatment of missing values (i) at country level and (ii) at regional level

• At country level

Missing values are left blank

• At regional and global levels

Missing values are left blank

4.g. Regional aggregations

Regional and global estimates are currently not produced due to limited data coverage.

4.h. Methods and guidance available to countries for the compilation of the data at the national level

In 2010 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNODC-UNECE) published a Manual on Victimization Surveys that provides technical guidance on the implementation of such surveys, on the basis of good practices developed at the country-level. The UNODC-UNECE Manual on Victimization Surveys (2010) is available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Crime-statistics/Manual_on_Victimization_surveys_2009_web.pdf

4.i. Quality management

UNODC has a statistical unit with dedicated staff to support the data collection through technical assistance, collating and verifying the received data and continuously improve data collection mechanisms including guidelines.

4.j. Quality assurance

It is recommended that NSOs serve as the main contact for compiling and assuring the quality of the necessary data to report on SDG 16.1.4, in close coordination with other relevant bodies in the country. Automated and substantive validation procedures are in place when data are processed by custodian agencies to assess their consistency and compliance with standards.

4.k. Quality assessment

UNODC will make available a quality assessment protocol for national statistics office to be used at national level and intended to assess the alignment of data produced with user's needs, the compliance with guidelines in terms of computations, the timeliness of data production, the accessibility of statistics produced, the consistent use of methodology both in terms of geographic representation and through time, the coherence in terms of data production, and the architecture of data production.

5. Data availability and disaggregation

A growing number of countries are implementing surveys using similar methodologies in order to assess the population's perception of safety and fear of crime. However, the scale and methods of administration vary. Many of these surveys contain the question needed to compute indicator 16.1.4. ('How safe do you feel walking alone in your area/neighbourhood after dark?'). This suggests that data on this indicator will become more widely available over the next few years.

Recommended disaggregation for this indicator:

- time of day (perception of safety "during the day" and "after dark")
- age
- sex
- disability status
- ethnicity
- migration background
- citizenship

6. Comparability/deviation from international standards

UNODC only compiles data from national sources, therefore no differences between nationally produced estimates and international estimates should exist.

7. References and Documentation

URL:

www.unodc.org

References:

Ferraro, K. F., & LaGrange, R. L.. 1987. "The measurement of fear of crime". Sociological Inquiry, 57(1), 70–101.

Roberts B. 2014. "Fear of Walking Alone at Night". In: Michalos A.C. (eds) Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_1023

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Warr, Mark. 1990. "Dangerous Situations: Social Context and Fear of Victimization". Social Forces. 68 (3): 891-907.